

Ho Chi Minh's legacy in the contemporary Vietnamese politics

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1. Introduction

Ho Chi Minh is not only a founder of the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) but also a great patriot and dedicated person, whose moral standards and simple lifestyle has become an example for the leaders and people to follow. With more than 75 years in ruling power in Vietnam, the CPV is well aware of challenges and risks associating with a sole ruling Party as Ho Chi Minh has identified earlier. These include risks of policy failure and the moral depreciation among the Party and government cadres. He stated in his testament that: "It is important to keep the Party clean to deserve the leading force and people's servant". Recent widespread and serious corruption, abuse of power, waste of public resources, deteriorated political strength...thread the Party's legitimacy and the regime's existence. It is therefore important for the Party to fight against the corruption and strengthen its members and cadres' political, moral and professional competence. The CPV has taken Ho Chi Minh's moral standards and lifestyle as the code of conducts for the leaders, cadres and officials in the political system. The recent CPV Congress XIII has set the improvement of the Party's moral standards as one of key priorities in its Party's building agenda.

2. Literature review

Madeline Fraser¹ concluded that Ho Chi Minh's legacy is ingrained in the hearts of the Vietnamese, just as the Confucian values were when Ho began his quest. In almost every store, home, or garden, an

¹ "An Assessment of Ho Chi Minh's Strategies for Gaining Support in the Vietnamese Revolution", Portland State University PDX Scholar, Young Historians Conference. 2, 2014

Allusion to the beloved Ho can be found, the Uncle who freed his people from colonialism and restored their dignity. However, Ho's legacy also extends outside of Vietnam. His success in the revolution demonstrates the necessity of a leader that compromises, honors cultural values and traditions, and also holds the ideals of nationalism above ideological purity.

Forkan Ali² pointed out that Ho Chi Minh supported the fundamental virtues and teaching of Confucianism, which he incorporated for the making of modern Vietnam. For Ho Chi Minh, Confucianism was not a religion but a school of philosophical thought which accommodates principles and teachings of moral virtues, as well as the way of creating unity and social cohesion. He also revised Marxism in relation to its historical basis, incorporating not only European history but also that of Asia, where he finds Confucian customs with a basis on East Asian history, particularly in respect to China and Vietnam. In this way of consolidating East Asian history, Ho Chi Minh always considered the people as the core of power. He believed there is nothing more powerful than the people.

Ho Chi Minh also takes the Confucius positive view about the learning of good government and the morals of the rulers, and re-educates the people of his government with these moral virtues in which the external arrangements of the institutions are less

² "The Origins of Contemporary Moral Education and Political Ideology in Confucian-Marxist Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam", Asian Studies VIII (XXIV), 2 (2020), pp. 115–134 1 DOI: 10.4312/as.2020.8.2.115-134

important than the internal moral arrangements of the people in the institutions. To re-establish the self-cultivation of the morality of the members of the new republic for the people, Hồ advocated following the essential Confucian values.

The educational principles in contemporary Vietnam have different forms of ideological understanding. Moral education is consolidated in the formal education system, which is based on personal moral principles, political and citizenship teachings. In all of these educational processes not only are Marxist ideology and the thoughts of Hồ Chí Minh present, but also Confucian philosophy, although mostly at the primary level. Most of these ideologies come under a broad term called moral education—traditional Confucian moral education, which mostly developed through both an informal method of education, like family or religious education, as well as a formal method like Marxist socialist moral education through the national curriculum... Political education is highly emphasized in the forms of moral education where not only Marxist-Leninist political objectives are highlighted, but also some Confucianist traditional teachings are carried out

Do Thi Kim Hoa and Michal Valco³ explored Ho Chi Minh's notion of human rights against the background of a Western conception of human rights and discussed on how to competently engage Ho Chi Minh's ideas on this topic in the new era of contemporary Vietnamese socio-economical transformations. They concluded that though not a saintly figure, Ho Chi Minh lived an exemplary life of an austere man, content with little comfort and deeply caring for the lives of ordinary people. This mindset and lifestyle (both political and personal) seems to deviate from the lives of many current top politicians in Vietnam, making his legacy both inspiring and 'inconvenient' for some of those who claim to look up to him. Critical voices emerge pointing out this unfortunate dichotomy

³ "The philosophy of human rights and the 'political man': Engaging the intellectual legacy of Ho Chi Minh in a technological era", January 2018, XLinguae, Volume 11, Issue 2, April 2018, ISSN 1337-8384, eISSN 2453-711X 615

between declared ideals (inspired by Ho Chi Minh) and actual socio-cultural reality in Vietnam.

Nguyen Van Hiep and Pham Ngoc Tram⁴ clarifies the historical value and epochal value of Ho Chi Minh's thought on human rights and national rights in the Declaration of Independence in 1945 and its application of the Communist Party of Vietnam on political system renovation in Vietnam. They argued that President Ho Chi Minh was the first Vietnamese to unify the two contents "independent country" and "free and happy people" as one - closely linking human rights and national rights. The Declaration of Independence 1945 has shown the insight, acumen and wide strategic vision, the ability to predict the genius of President Ho Chi Minh, is the result of a wide vision, of many thoughts and worries. , and most of all, of a heart always towards the country and the Vietnamese people.

Thai Quang Trung⁵ demonstrated that Ho Chi Minh's style of collective leadership has contributed to the institutionalization of factionalism in Hanoi. His policy of equidistance between Moscow and Beijing became more or less a necessity for the leadership's unity. This book addresses itself to the question: Did Ho Chi Minh leave behind a unified party? The book provides an understanding of one of the most enigmatic - and the most long-lasting - leaderships in the communist annals, and examines the current state of the Hanoi regime.

Peter Neville⁶ shows that Ho was the father of his nation, a major protagonist in the Cold War and anti-colonial struggle, and the promoter of a distinctive Vietnamese form of communism. This biography charts his life from his early years and education in Europe to his establishment of the

⁴ "Ho Chi Minh thought on human rights and ethnic rights in the 1945 independent situation and the use of the political system", Journal of Critical Reviews ISSN- 2394-5125 vol 7, issue 04, 2020

⁵ Book "Collective Leadership and Factionalism: An Essay on Ho Chi Minh's Legacy", Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, published 1985

⁶ Book "Ho Chi Minh", ISBN 9781138694118, published 31 August 2018 by Routledge

revolutionary pro-communist movement, the Viet Minh, and his subsequent rise to power. Placing important emphasis on his role as a military organizer while stressing his preference for diplomatic solutions, this book contains detailed analysis of the complex talks with France and failure to prevent the Franco-Viet Minh war in 1946. It also follows Ho's complex relationships with America, China, France, and Russia, and explores the Vietnam War and his legacy.

3. The Party's moral status

Over the last 90 years, the CPV cadres and members play important role in setting good examples in difficult times and situations, contributing greatly to the country's independence protection and socio-economic development. The first generation of the Party's leaders were recruited and trained directly by Ho Chi Minh such as Vo Nguyen Giap, Pham Van Dong, Truong Chinh, Le Duan...are all competent, dedicated and great people. The Party has shown great leadership in the fighting for the country's independence and sovereignty, socio-economic development and containing the COVID-19. In the wars, million of the Party's cadres and members sacrificed their lives for the cause of the country's independence. As a result, the Party gained great trust and respect from the people.

However, the country's rapid socio-economic development associated with challenges for the ruling party CPV. These include widespread and serious corruption and wrongdoings, growing distance between the Party and people, increasing political and moral deterioration among the Party's cadres and members. This is threatening the Party's legitimacy and eroding the people's trust and respect if not effectively addressed. As the Central Committee Plenum 4, terure XII warned: "These violations and errors affect the Party's leadership role, deteriorate the trust and respect of people and threaten the Party and regime's existence" (6, page 23).

The Party therefore has been taking serious actions on combatting corruption, wrongdoings, abuse of power, disciplinary violations as well as

strengthening the cadres and members moral standards.

Regarding corruption, there is no restriction area. From 2013-2020, 131 000 Party members have been disciplined due to corruption, violations and wrongdoings. Just over the last five years, about 87 000 Party cadres and members have been disciplined. There were 3 200 Party members, of which 110 high-ranking officials including 27 Central Committee members, four Politbureau members, 30 generals disciplined in 2020. There were 11 700 corruption cases brought to court, 814 people including 18 high-ranking officials (one Politbureau member, seven Central Committee members, four ministers, seven generals) sentenced to prison. About USD 30 billion of corrupted money collected. These help change the picture dramatically. As a result, the country has moved up nine ranks in the Transparency International global ranking from 2016 to 104/180 in 2020.

In addition, the Party encourages the cadres and members to learn from Ho Chi Minh moral standards and clean, simple lifestyle. The leaders are expected to set good examples for their subordinates. The reporting, checking and inspection has been systematically carried out.

Finally, the Party has strengthened its internal controlling system to prevent abuse of power. There has been better clarity on role, responsibility and accountability, stricter cross checking and balancing among agencies and individuals in the political system. The heads of agencies and local authorities are held responsible for any violation within their jurisdiction.

However, there are critical challenges and risks. The anti-corruption efforts are carried out in a relatively top-down manner within the Party and state system with limited participation from people and civil society. The collective leadership makes the personnal accountability unclear. Heavy and complex structure of the political system prevents openness and transparency. The risks associated with the single ruling party remain high without systematic solutions.

Root causes of this status include:

- I. Rapid socio-economic development induces negative effects. These include corruption related to investment, construction, land management, state asset privatization, connection and collusion between businesses with corrupted officials, practical mindset and nourverish lifestyle.
- II. Gaps between political system and the socio-economic development demands. The outdated soviet style political system lags behind the country's rapid development process. As a result, there are critical management gaps due to the lack of capacity, policies and mechanisms.
- III. Political and moral depreciation among the Party's cadres and members due to negative effects of globalization, socio-economic development and political opportunism.

4. Recommendations

The solutions to strengthen the Party's moral standards are as follows:

First, raising awareness and education for all Party members on necessity and requirements of the Party's moral standards enhancement. The Party's committees at all levels should be tasked to monitor the Party's members' efforts and and checking on results.

Second, strengthening the reform of political system structure, improvement of the link with the people. Disclose and publish information for people's inputs, debate, contribution and monitoring.

Third, further acceleration of anti-corruption efforts in a more systematic manner. It is important to review and address the gaps in policy and management mechanisms, carry out Party's cadres and members income report, audit, inspection. Set up effective cross-check and balance to prevent abuse of power, violations and wrongdoings. Encourage people and civil society organizations to find out, report and combat the corruption. Set up hotline for reporting on corruption activities. Strengthen the capacity and investment for anti-corruption agencies and professionals.

Fourth, strengthening human resource management. It is important to indentify, train and retain, appoint and reward the good performers and talented people. Encourage the head of agencies/local authorities to set good examples in following Ho Chi Minh's moral standards and lifestyle.

Fifth, checking, supervising and strictly penalizing the corrupted and violated Party's cadres and members. Promote and enable participation of and monitoring by people and civil society.

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